WARNING: MEDICARE "FREE" SCOOTER SCAM

HONOLULU – The Executive Office on Aging's SageWatch Program wants to caution consumers about a scam that is defrauding Medicare. The scam usually starts with someone approaching an elderly person and offering to help them get a "free" scooter. To do this they need the person's Medicare number. **A Medicare number is the same as your Social Security Number; never give either to a stranger**.

If a person does supply personal information, the scam artist may come back with a scooter, they may take the elderly person to a "clinic" to see a doctor, or they may never come back. Regardless of the outcome in most cases, the individual's Medicare account still will be charged.

If a scooter is supplied, the criminal tells the recipient it costs around $5,000. (This is NOT true. A power scooter costs around $2,000 and is never referred to as a "wheelchair" by Medicare.) This information is given to the recipient so they will not become suspicious when their Medicare Summary Notice shows a power wheelchair at a cost of over $5,000. If Medicare were properly billed for the product received, the Medicare Summary Notice would use the initials "POV" and show a charge for about $2,000.

If Medicare gets billed for something not received, it might affect the individual's ability to get the product in the future, when it's really needed.

Medicare will pay for a scooter if you qualify, and you should have a scooter if you need it. What you don't need is a stranger taking you to a doctor you do not know. Your own doctor can qualify you and direct you to a reputable dealer. The "free" scooter scam is just another way for criminals to steal tax dollars from Medicare.

If someone you don't know offers to help you get something for free, stop and ask questions. Don't provide any personal information until you have checked them out thoroughly. One way to

do this is to call the Better Business Bureau. If you suspect that you have been a victim of Medicare fraud, take the time to report it by calling SageWatch at (808) 586-7281 or toll free at (800) 296-9422 or the Better Business Bureau at 536-6956 or toll free at (877) 222-6551.